

# News Release

## *Great Dismal Swamp*

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



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[www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp)

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### Lateral West Fire Declared Out

Suffolk, Virginia— Recent rains have finally doused the Lateral West Fire in the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Refuge staff surveyed the burn area on Friday and found no evidence of smoke. On Monday, an aerial reconnaissance flight confirmed those findings. Refuge Fire Management Officer, Tim Craig, reported on Tuesday, “We are happy this one is out. This has been a very difficult fire that moved deep into the peat soils of the swamp during a period of below normal rainfall. However, we are now confident the ground fire is no longer active.”

The fire was discovered on August 4, 2011, the result of two separate lightning strikes whose flames eventually grew into the catastrophic event. The fire consumed 6,574 acres and as much as five feet of peat soils. Including Hurricane Irene totals, 21.61 inches of rain fell at the refuge weather station between August 27 and November 21. October and November were very dry, with only 1.5 inches total precipitation up until today, aiding the fire’s long life of 111 days.

The popular auto tour route to Lake Drummond remains closed. The route crosses through the burned area and received extensive damage from fire related heavy equipment. Repairs are now underway and a reopening announcement will be made when the road is again safe for public access.

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is one of 548 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the system is the world’s premiere network of public lands and waters. The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

For more information, please contact the refuge headquarters at 757/986-3705 or visit us on the web at [www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp).